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Some Miſcellany

OBSERVATIONS

On our preſent Debates reſpecting
Witchcrafts, in a *Dialogue*
Between S. & B.

By P. E. and J. A.

Philadelphia, Printed by *William Bradford*, for *Hezekiah Uſher*.

1692.

BOSTON:
"CONGREGATIONAL QUARTERLY" REPRINT.—No. I.
1869.

2d
1294

One Hundred copies printed.

No. 11

INTRODUCTORY NOTICE.

DURING the Witch excitement and trials at Salem in 1692 a heated Controverſy aroſe in the Province reſpecting the methods to be purſued by the Civil Magiſtrates in detecting and puniſhing Witchcraft, there being at the time no doubt in any mind as to the reality of Diabolical Agency. With regard to the methods of dealing with this ſubtile and myſterious agency there was a wide divergence of opinion.

One Theory was that the Devil could operate, by means of Spectres, Fits, Spaſms, &c., only through Perſons who were in willing league with him, or, in other words, with Actual Witches. This was the Theory of Sir *Matthew Hale*, and was generally maintained at the Witch Trials in England. Teſtimony as to ſpectral and other preternatural appearances was freely admitted againſt the Accuſed, and a *prima facie* caſe of Witchcraft was thereby eſtabliſhed, which was uſually fatal. This Theory was ſtrenuouſly maintained by the Legal Profeſſion. The minds of the Judges who condemned the Twenty Victims at Salem were chained to this Dogma.

Another Theory was the one generally maintained by the Clergy of that day in New England, that the Devil could and did cauſe the Spectres of Pious and Virtuous Perſons to appear as readily as that of Perſons in league with him; that ſpectral evidence was the "Devil's Teſtimony"; that the evidence of Confeſſed Witches muſt be rejected, and the Accuſed tried by Legal Evidence, and by the ſame rules as if the charge had been that of Murder or Burglary. This was the ſubſtance of the advice given to the Governor and Council June 15, 1692, by the Miniſters of *Boſton* and the vicinity.

The diſcuſſion of theſe two Theories was the great queſtion in debate at the time, and this fact has been ſingularly ignored by ſome Writers on Salem Witchcraft. Mr. *Poole*, in his paper on "*Cotton Mather* and *Salem*

Witchcraft," in the North American Review for April, 1869, has preſented the ſubject in a new light by furniſhing Cotemporaneous Documents hitherto neglected. One of theſe is a rare and anonymous Tract written by Reverend *Samuel Willard*, of the Old South Church, entitled "Some Miſcellany Obſervations reſpecting Witchcraft in a Dialogue between S. and B.." and printed in *Philadelphia* in 1692. It is a quarto tract of ſixteen pages. "Its Reproduction," ſays Mr. *Poole*, "at this time would throw more light upon the Opinions of the New England Clergy reſpecting Witchcraft than any other Document that has not been republiſhed. It is written with great ability and logical acumen." The "S. and B." who carry on the Dialogue may have been intended for *Stoughton* and *Brattle*, or *Salem* and *Boſton*. "S." defends the Theory of the Magiſtrates, and "B." that of the Clergy.

Calef, in his "More Wonders of the Inviſible World," 1700, p. 38, mentions, in a letter to Mr. *Willard*, "that late ſeaſonable and well-deſigned Dialogue entitled 'Some Miſcellany Obſervations,' &c., of which yourſelf is the ſuppoſed Author, and which was ſo ſerviceable in the time of it," and he attempts to confute ſome of its Poſitions. *Calef's* teſtimony on any matter of Fact, unleſs ſupported by other evidence, is of little value. *Calef* in this inſtance is correct in aſcribing the authorſhip of this Tract to Mr. *Willard*, for we have the corroborating teſtimony of *Cotton Mather* to the ſame fact. Mr. *Mather* writes in 1702: "I remember that when this Miſerable Man [*Calef*] ſent unto an Eminent Miniſter in the town [Mr. *Willard*] a libellous letter reflecting on a judicious Diſcourſe written by him, and when he demanded and expected an anſwer to his follies, that Reverend Perſon only ſaid, 'Go tell him that the anſwer to him and his letter is in the twenty-ſixth of the Proverbs and the fourth.'" (*Some Few Remarks*, p. 35.)

The following is a reprint of the Tract, from the copy in the poſſeſſion of the Maſſachuſetts Hiſtorical Society, whoſe courteſy is hereby acknowledged.

EDITORS, 1869.

The figures in brackets denote the commencement of pages in the original. The Tract had no diſtinct title-page.

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Sir,

S. I 'Underſtand that you and many others are greatly diſſatisfied at 'the Proceedings among us, in the purſuance of thoſe that have 'been Accuſed for Witchcraft, and have accordingly ſought to obſtruct 'them; which I am afraid will prove pernicious to the Land; and that 'for more reaſons than one; principally in the hazzard of Breaches and 'Diviſions among us, which tend to ſome unhappy Change; and ſome-'body will be to blame.

B. Sir, the Peace of a Place is earneſtly to be ſought, and they that ſinfully cauſe Diviſions, will be guilty of all the miſerable effects of them: but whether this blame will truly fall upon you or us, is to be conſidered: there is an earneſt contending for the Truth requiſite, and that is not to be parted with for Peace.

S. 'No doubt every one will juſtifie himſelf in his own way; but men 'are not for that Innocent: yea, the moſt blameworthy are for the moſt 'part carried out with the greateſt Confidence.

B. True, I could reflect here; but I ſpare. Only give me leave to

[2] tell you, that we have more reaſons to plead our integrity by, than poſſibly you know of or will eaſily believe.

S. '*I would gladly hear them.*

B. I confeſs, the Animoſities on both ſides have been ſinful, and much obſtructive to the coming at the Truth: but if you will promiſe placidly to argue the Caſe with me, you ſhall hear what we have to ſay; and I will as readily entertain anything from you: and if we can come to a better underſtanding between us, it will be well.

S. 'The propoſal is fair, and I shall endeavor to comply with it; 'only give me leave firſt to Catechiſe you in a few things.

B. I ſhall freely give you my ſenſe of anything you will ask.

S. 'Do you believe that there are any Witches?

B. Yes, no doubt; the Scripture is clear for it; and it is an injurious reflection that ſome of yours have caſt upon us, as if we called that Truth in queſtion. Whether anything we atteſt doth undermine it, is to be conſidered.

S. 'And ought not theſe Witches to be Puniſhed?

B. Without queſtion; the Precept of Gods Word is for it: only they muſt firſt be ſo proved.

S. 'But may not Witches be ſo Detected, as to be liable to a right-'eous Sentence and Execution?

B. I believe it, though I think it not ſo eaſy as ſome make it, yet God oſten righteouſly leaves them to diſcover themſelves.

S. 'Ought not the Civil Magiſtrate to uſe utmoſt diligence in the 'Searching out Witchcraft, where he is directed by Gods Providence to 'grounds of a juſt ſuſpicion of it?

B. Doubtleſs: yet ought he to manage the matter with great Prudence and Caution, and attend right Rules in the Search. But now give me leave to take the like liberty of propounding two or three queſtions to you?

S. 'With Freedom.

B. Taking it for granted that there are Witches in NEW ENGLAND, which no rational man will dare to deny; I aſk whether Innocent Perſons may not be falſely accuſed of Witchcraft?

S. 'I verily believe it, and hope none of you ſuppoſe us ſo uncharit-'able as to think the contrary.

B. Do you not think it an hard lot for an Innocent Perſon to have the aſperſion of VVitchcraft caſt upon him?

S. 'VVithout ſcruple; there being no Crime more ſcandalous and 'abominable; nor any that is with more difficulty wiped off.

B. All of you are not ſo minded on my Knowledge: but ought there [3] not to be good grounds of ſuſpicion, before a perſon (eſpecially of honeſt Converſation) be brought on to the ſtage to be examined for ſuch a Crime?

S. 'I ſee no danger in owning the Affirmative; I am not yet con-'vinced that there is any Reflexion in it upon us.

B. That is not my buſineſs: but do you think that every ſuſpicion is enough to commit a man to Priſon for ſuch a Crime?

S. 'Why not, if the ſuſpicion be built on juſt Preſumptions! for this 'is only in order to a fair Trial, which is to paſs through two Juries, where 'he will have the liberty to Vindicate his Innocence openly.

B. You muſt give me leave to diſſent from you here, before I Proceed in my Queries. I am informed that in a Legal Warrant made for the Commitment of a Perſon, his Crime may not be mentioned under the Lenefying term of ſuſpicion; but the Act or Acts are to be Expreſly Charged; *E. G.* you are to take into your Cuſtody, *&c.* for ſeveral Acts of Witchcraft Committed on the body of, *&c.* now certainly, there is more than a meer ſuſpicion upon fallacious Preſumptions, neceſſary for the doing of this Honeſtly. Our ſtatute Laws therefore have provided great Cautions againſt the Committing of perſons without Subſtantial grounds; Beſides, it is certain, that on lighter ſuſpicions of Capital Crimes, Bail may be taken; ſo that if the perſon be committed to Goal,

his Mittimus goes for want of Bail, and doth not directly charge the Crime on him; yea and Bail may ſtill be taken after Commitment. Moreover, Reaſon it ſelf ſaith, that when a man is Committed without Bail, and may not come off without a Jury; and in order to that an Indictment muſt be formed againſt him, where the Acts are again to be Poſitively & Particularly charged upon him, and Witneſſes to be Examined, which expoſeth him to open Ignominy, there ought to be ſomething Subſtantial againſt him. Yea Conſcience will tell a Juſtice, that if he verily believes that a Grand Jury ought not, or cannot Legally find *Billa vera* againſt ſuch a man, he doth him an ineparable wrong in ſo committing him; ſince hereby, his Credit is Steined, his Liberty Reſtreined, his Time Loſt, and great Charges and Damages come upon him; *which, who ſhall repair?*

S. 'Theſe things ſeem to have ſome weight in them, but I think them 'aliene from our Caſe: pleaſe then to Proceed.

B. I believe them not ſo aliene; but for the preſent let me aſk: Do you think that a leſs clear Evidence is ſufficient for Conviction in the Caſe of Witchcraft, than is neceſſary in other Capital Caſes, ſuppoſe Murder, *&c.*

S. 'We ſuppoſe it neceſſary to take up with leſs, how elſe ſhall 'Witches be detected and puniſhed according to Gods Command? 'Witchcraft is [4] then eſteemed Capital, when the perſon is Guilty of 'being in Combination with the Devil; which muſt be proved by Pre-'ſumptions; for who ſaw or heard them Covenanting?

B. This is a dangerous Principle, and contrary to the mind of God, who hath appointed that there ſhall be good and clear proof againſt the Criminal: elſe he is not Providentially delivered into the hands of Juſtice, to be taken off from the earth. Nor hath God exempted this Caſe of Witchcraft from the General Rule. Beſides, reaſon tells us, that the more horrid the Crime is, the more Cautious we ought to be in making any guilty of it.

S. 'But how then ſhall Witches be detected and executed? Muſt 'the Land grown under the burden of them, and is there no relief?

B. Witches (as other Criminals) are not to be executed till detected; nor are they detected, till indubitably proved to be ſo: for which we are to uſe Gods way, and wait his time: and his will in his Providence is, that ſome mens ſins ſhall go before hand to Judgment, and others ſhall come after.

S. 'But Divines & Lawyers put great weight on Preſumptions as '*Perkins*, *Bernard*, *Dalton*, *&c.*, and you ſeem to make them inſigni-'ficant.

B. So we are indeed charged, but injuriouſly. As for *Dalton*, he only preſcribes Rules for Juſtices in their private Capacity, for the Examining, or at moſt the commitment of the Perſons ſuſpected; and his Rules are given ſo Confuſedly, that I think no Juſtice can underſtand his Duty by them. As for *Perkins* and *Bernard*, whom you inſtance in; I preſume that either you have not read them, or miſtake them. They rightly diſtinguiſh between Preſumption and Conviction; and tell us that some Preſumptions, are ſtronger than others; ſome only ſufficient for Examination, others enough for Commitment: but they confidently aver, that all preſumptions, which are no more but ſo, are ſhort of being Conviction; *and where are you then?* and indeed they ſay nothing but what hath good reaſon in it; for to put a man to death by bare Preſumptions, is to do it by gueſs, and that is ſomething hard.

S. 'You ſeem to be very nice and critical in this point.

B. And why not? there is Life in the caſe; beſides a perpetual infamy on the perſon, and a ruinous reproach upon his Family.

S. 'But what then will you allow for a clear Conviction?

B. I will tell you my thoughts in ſeveral Particulars, Againſt which if you pleaſe you may object: and Firſt, there muſt be a matter of fact evidently done, and proved: for, where there is no fact there is no ground of accuſation againſt any perſon.

S. 'I ſhall make no reply againſt this.

[5] *B.* Secondly; this matter of fact muſt carry in it the Evidence of the Crime which it is brought to prove.

S. 'What do you mean by Evidence?

B. I mean, that it be infallibly, or if you will, indubetably certain, that he who did that fact, rendered himſelf by it Guilty of the Crime, for the proof whereof it is alledged; otherwiſe, the Crime is not found out by the fact.

S. 'Why may not a ſtrong Preſumption do here, eſpecially if there 'be many facts which look that way?

B. Good reaſon; for if the fact may be done, and yet the perſon doing it be innocent of the Crime, the Verdict is meerly conjectural, and the man dyes by will and doom: whereas God hath not granted to men ſuch a power over one anothers Lives. If the Hypotheſis be not neceſſary, there can be no Evidence or Demonſtration drawn from it: and if the artificial argument fail, the Teſtimony cannot affect the party.

S. 'You may pleaſe to proceed.

B. Thirdly; a full and clear Legal diſcovery, that the party accuſed hath done the fact by which the Crime is evidenced. For it is one thing to be certain that there is Witchcraft in the thing, and another to know who is concerned in it: nor are we to fix it upon conjectures, be they never ſo probable.

S. 'We ſhall agree in this Doctrine of a Legal diſcovery, and if we 'can do ſo in the Application, I hope there will be no further difference 'between us. Pleaſe then to interpret your mind in this matter.

B. There are two things whereby this Concluſion may be made evident; and any one of them is ſufficient: and they are both of them well known, and plentifully ſpoken to by Authors: it will there be needleſs now to inſiſt on them.

S. 'Let us a little Diſcourſe on it, for poſſibly we are not of one mind 'about them.

B. The firſt is, A free and full Confeſſion made by the Accuſed Perſon, of the Fact, being in his right mind, and not frighted or forced into it.

S. 'But may not a perſon falſly accuse himſelf, and ſo dy of a Crime 'of which he is Innocent?

B. He may: nevertheleſs, if all due means be uſed, his Blood is on his own Head, and the Civil Authority will be blameleſs.

S. 'VVhat mean you by a perſon in his right mind?

B. One that is neither diſtracted nor diſcontented; and ſo may not be ſuppoſed either to confeſs he knows not what; or to do it to rid himſelf of life, and to diſtraction I account deep Mellancholy expreſſed by the [6] prevalency of ſtrange Imaginations, apt to lead him into a belief of anything againſt himſelf or others. In theſe caſes much tenderneſs is to be uſed.

S. 'But how ſhall this be known?

B. Enquiry is to be made of thoſe that converſe with them: and if there be nothing appear but that they are in their right mind, the Caſe is clear againſt them.

S. 'But you talk of a free and voluntary Confeſſion; Do you con-'demn the Examining of them by Civil Authority, and ſtrictly proving 'them by queſtions, which are proper to bring them to ſuch a Confeſ-'ſion?

B. By no means, provided it be fairly done.

S. 'When is that?

B. Firſt, When there are ſtrong Preſumptions againſt the Perſon; and that is the main uſe of Preſumption, *viz.* to bring the perſon upon Examination; and to do it without ſuch, is a breach of the Rule of Charity, which is to think no evil.

S. 'And when elſe?

B. Secondly, As I before ſaid, when means are not uſed to force or fright them into it. Extorted Confeſſions are not fair.

S. 'You talk of Spaniſh Inquiſitions; I hope none of ours are 'chargeable with it, and yet I know there are ſome who plead for Ex- 'amination by Torture?

B. See you to that; I am not accuſing, but arguing; and let me tell you, there are other ways of undue force and fright, beſides, Racks, Strappadoes and ſuch like things as Spaniſh Inquiſitors uſe.

S. 'What are they?

B. I may tell you another time: but I now paſs to the ſecond ground of Conviction, which is, The Teſtimony of two ſufficient Humane Witneſſ- es, to one and the ſame Individual Fact, as done by the Party Accuſed.

S. 'You are too ſtreight Laced in expreſſing of this, and I am diſ- 'ſatisfied with it.

B. I am willing to be convinced by Reaſon.

S. 'I ſee no reaſon why it is neceſſary that there ſhould be two Wit- 'neſſes to the ſame Individual Fact: I thought it had been enough, if it 'were to the ſame Fact in Specie: I know Judicious and Learned Men 'are of this mind, and tell us, that it is enough to gain Humane credit; 'if one man ſay that he ſaw Lions in *Africa* laſt year, and another comes '& ſays that he ſaw Lions there this year; though it was not at the ſame 'time, nor likely the ſame Individual Lions: why then may it not do in 'this Caſe?

[7] *B.* The caſe is vaſtly different. I may give an Historical Credit to Reports, upon probable grounds, becauſe, if they ſhould prove falſe, no man is hurt by it, and therefore, one good credible Author may ſuffice here. But to take away the Names and Lives of Perſons on ſo eaſy a belief, is not ſo light a matter. The miſtake doth a miſchief irreparable. Beſides, the moral reaſon of appointing two Witneſſes at leaſt to confirm a matter by, is properly referrible to Individual Facts: for, it is by ſuch that a man is proved guilty: now my denial challengeth as much credit as anothers affirmation againſt me: and every particular Fact, having my particular denial againſt him that chargeth me; there is but one to

one in that Individual: and the Law of Equity and Charity requires that I be believed in my own *D*efence, where there is nothing to preponderate.

S. 'If this Rule be always followed, it will be hard to puniſh Wickedneſs.

B. If it be not carefully followed, there will be no Security for Innocence.

S. 'I am not clear what you mean by Humane Witneſſes; I have 'underſtood that you deny the Afflicted Perſons to be ſuch.

B. That is one of your miſtakes; and you labour of a great many in your judging of us: We acknowledge the Afflicted Perſons to be Humane; and if they are Witneſſes at all, they muſt be Humane Witneſſes; but I truſt you will ſee your Error anon.

S. 'But what then do you mean by the Teſtimony of Humane Wit-'neſſes?

B. I mean, that the Teſtimony it ſelf be Humane, as well as the Witneſſes; or, to ſpeak more plain, that the Thing Teſtified be that which he came to the knowledge of, after the manner of men.

S. 'What do you mean by that?

B. I intend, That which one man can know concerning another by his Senſes, and that according to the true nature, and uſe of them; whatſoever comes in any other way, is either by extraordinary Revelation from God, or by the inſinuation of the *D*evil; and what Credit is legally to be given to a thing which an Humane Perſon ſwears, meerly upon the Devils Information?

S. 'It ſeems then you would altogether invalidate the Teſtimony of 'our Afflicted?

B. I have many things againſt it, which I ſhall reduce to two Heads. Firſt, I cannot think them to be competent VVitneſſes.

S. 'It may be you run away with the common vogue, that they are 'ſcandalous perſons, liars, and looſe in their Converſation, and therefore 'not to [8] be believed: but you are miſtaken: and if they were, yet they 'may by this affliction be made better; but however; they are not upon

'Record for any of theſe things, and are therefore without any legal ex-
'ception.

B. I have heard many things of that nature, and I do believe, if they be true, and made ſo to appear, it ought to weaken their Teſtimony, although they do not ſtand upon Record; ſo that if ſuch things be proved before a Jury (who are Judges of VVitneſſes, and of the weight of their Evidence) they are in Conſcience to count them inſufficient, and I am ſure that utmoſt care ought to be had about the qualifications of ſuch whoſe Teſtimony is taken againſt mens lives; that they be according to the Rules, which Moral Heathen, by the light of nature have acknowledged to be neceſſary. But here is not my great ſtick.

S. 'Why? They are Humane Perſons as well as you.

B. True; and yet there may be that which will render them incompetent. As, ſuppoſe them to be poſſeſſed perſons. I know you ſtifly deny it, becauſe you fore-ſee that if you grant it, their Witneſs is thereby rendred invalid.

S. 'Yea, and we have ſufficient reaſon to deny it.

B. Be not over confident, you may be miſtaken. What are your reaſons?

S. 'They are bewitched, and therefore not poſſeſſed; there are ſeven
'ſigns of one bewitched, and ſix of theſe agree in them.

B. I diſpute not that; though I find ſome to be very confuſed in this point: but ſuppoſing them bewitched, they may be poſſeſſed too: and it is an ordinary thing for a poſſeſſion to be introduced by a bewitching, as there are many inſtances in Hiſtory do confirm.

S. 'But they have their fits by times and are out of them again.

B. And yet they may be poſſeſſed. Such as were poſſeſſed by Devils, on the records of the Goſpel Hiſtory, were ſo.

S. 'But there is no Symptom on them, which may not well agree to
'one that is bewitched, and not poſſeſſed.

B. I believe you are miſtaken. I could name many things, which I

think muſt prove them Witches or poſſeſſed; and I charitably believe the latter of them.

S. 'I could never be convinced of that.

B. It may be ſo; and I could give a reaſon for it. But what do you think of their extraordinary ſight, which you make ſo much uſe of to the aſtoniſhment of ſome of us? and what of their telling of things done at a diſtance, their Predicting of things future! and (if you may be Credited) their diſcovering of things Secret, and done before they were born, [9] and telling the names of perſons whom they never heard of; and many things of like nature.

S. 'I believe theſe may be the effects of Witchcraft.

B. Not of meer Witchcraft; nor yet are infallible evidence of Witchcraft: they may be without it, immediately from the Devil; and cannot be without either ſome poſſeſſion, or ſome unlawful commerce with the Devil.

S. 'You will hardly perſwade ours to believe you on this point.

B. It may be ſo: but I have further to object againſt their being ſufficient Witneſſes. *Viz.* Their incapacity to give a full and clear Teſtimony, to the face of the Priſoner at the Barr; and yet that is requiſite by Law and Reaſon.

S. 'That is becauſe the Witches ſmite them down with their poiſoned 'Looks.

B. That is more than you can prove: but ſuppoſe it; they are hereby Providentially prevented of doing that which is requiſite in a Legal Witneſs.

S. 'It is indeed an Obſtruction for a time: but with much Patience there is at length a Teſtimony gained of them.

B. A poor one too: for you ſay that the Devil ſomtimes takes away their memory, and it muſt be refreſhed, by putting things to them, and that is enough: ſomtimes alſo there muſt be a great many parcels in the Evidence, and that muſt make it confuſed.

S. 'But ſomtimes they are as well as you are, and are they not com-
'petent Witneſſes now?

B. I doubt that; for whiles they have their ſpectral ſight, I cannot ſuppose them to be clear from the Charm. But this is not the thing I mainly inſiſt upon; But the ſecond thing I would plead to is, their Teſtimony is not Convictive.

S. 'How ſo?

B. For two reaſons, becauſe it is not Humane; nor doth it affect the perſon.

S. 'Why not Humane? they are Humane perſons I ſuppoſe that
'give it.

B. True; but how came they by their Knowledge? it is not according to the way that is natural for men to know things by; but it is either Supernaturally, or Preter-naturally; and that muſt be Extraordinarily, either from God or Satan.

S. 'Many of us think it to be from God for the diſcovery of Witch craft.

[10] *B.* And one of yours tells me, he is confirmed in it, becauſe the confeſſing Witches ſay ſo. But no more of that. I am ſure, by your own conceſſions, the moſt of their information is from the Afflicting Spectres, and the Black man, (it may be ſomtimes he puts on white, to look like an Angel of Light) I believe when God raiſeth up Prophets, he will reveale himſelf in ſome other way to them, than by Devils; and in ſome other ſort of raptures than in Tormenting Fits.

S. 'But if it be of the Devil, it may be over-ruled by God to diſcover
'wicked perſons, and bring them to deſerved puniſhment.

B. I believe Devils are under the Government of Gods Providence, & may be by his ruling hand improved in ſuch diſcoveries; but it is without their deſigning either the Glory of God or the good of men, but the contrary; and therefore whatever comes from them is to be ſuſpected; and it is dangerous uſing or crediting them too far.

S. 'But what if God will Extraordinarily uſe Devils in this affair? 'ſhall we reject his Providence in it?

B. This is a thing which I am not ready to believe in this Caſe; and that becauſe it is an inſufficient Medium to attain the end, and that for the Second reaſon I named, *Viz.* it doth not affect the perſon accuſed.

S. 'You ſaid ſo indeed; but it needs proof.

B. When I ſay it affects him not; I principally intend, it will not amount to an evidence againſt him; and if ſo, what diſcovery is there in it?

S. 'Do you not believe that his Spectre is ſeen afflicting by the per- 'ſon afflicted?

B. Suppoſing it; yet it doth not hence follow that he is the Witch.

S. 'We muſt grant that it is the Devil in the Spectre; but it is by 'the Parties conſent, and therefore it proves him Guilty.

B. I know you all plead ſo; and tell us that the Devil cannot repreſent an Innocent perſon doing miſchief, but never proved it; nor can we believe you.

S. 'Where then is the Rectoral Holineſs of God in Governing the 'World?

B. Where was it when God ſuffered *Naboths* Life to be taken away, by falſe Witneſſes? where was it when *Solomon* made that remarke in, *Eccleſ.* 8. 14? It is not for ſuch ſilly Mortals as you and I to preſcribe to him who ſits King for ever.

S. 'But how could the VVorld ſtand if it might be ſo permitted?

B. There are ſome things now and then Evene; that if it were com- [11] mon, would ſubvert the VVorld: and if Devils had their unreſtrained Liberty, they would ſoon diſcover it: and yet for God when he pleaſeth to ſuffer ſuch things, to Evene in a way of Judgment, is conſiſtent with his Holineſs, and is alſo Doctrinal to us.

S. 'But by this notion good mens lives might be expoſed and loſt.

B. That is your fault who give ſuch a credit to theſe things. I believe, if it were your lot to be thus accuſed, you would think it hard ſo to be ſo cenſured, or dealt by: you would either repent of your raſhneſs, or turn Atheiſt.

S. 'I never fear it; God will never permit ſuch a thing.

B. That makes you ſo cenſorious: and others have ſo ſaid, but now they are accuſed, and eat their words.

S. 'Can you give an inſtance of any Godly Perſon ſo accuſed?

B. Hiſtory ſupplies us with enough, and thoſe not only Innocent, which were ſufficient, but famous for extraordinary Piety.

S. 'Who knows but they were Hypocrites and Witches for all?

B. True, and ſo are you for ought *I* certainly know: but the Rule of Charity bids us to think well of them, till that appear which ought to remove this Charity.

S. 'We think ſo too, but ſuppoſe here is enough, preſuming it neceſ-'ſary that there muſt be the conſent of the party.

B. And it is a preſumption in you, and inſufficient, till you can prove that the Devil cannot do it without their conſent, which I believe you never will.

S. 'We do not yet ſee that you have proved that he ever hath ſo 'done.

B. That's a wheedle: none knows anothers heart: let us produce the moſt eminent inſtances of that kind, and you reply, who knows but they were Hypocrites and Witches? But meanwhile you forget that it lies upon you to prove, that it cannot be; elſe how can you ſafely conclude the Evidence you would draw from it? it is a principle you practiſe upon, and ſure you ſhould make it good: Beſides, we have arguments to make it Rationally appear, that it may well be.

S. 'We are willing to hearken to Reaſon.

B. That's well: Do you really believe that all the perſons accuſed are Witches?

S. 'God forbid that I ſhould be ſo uncharitable.

B. This is a plain contradiction: for if you believe the former concluſion, you muſt either ſuſpect the Accuſers of Falſhood, which you will not bear, or of a deluſion, which you deny, or that all ſo Accuſed are Guilty.

[12] S. 'We are indeed aſtoniſhed at the thing; eſpecially ſince the 'number of the accuſed is ſo formidably encreaſed.

B. Nor is there a proſpect of an end of thoſe accuſations in this way. But will you admit of a little reaſoning in this caſe? I ſuppoſe you believe that the Devil can do this, and will too, ſhould God permit him ſo far.

S. 'No doubt.

B. That God may permit him, conſiſtent with his Rectoral Holineſs, is (I think) undeniable. He can make a ſcourge of it to puniſh a Backſliding People by: he can humble his own Children by it, and make it turn to their good in the end; he hath done things as unaccountable as this; and who hath limited him in this only caſe.

S. 'But if the Afflicted Perſons Teſtifie that they ſee ſuch an one 'afflicting them perſonally, muſt not this be Convictive? ſhall he excuſe 'himſelf by ſaying the Devil did it in his likeneſs, without his conſent? 'may not men make this excuſe in all other Crimes that are witneſſed 'againſt them? and where is the courſe of Juſtice then?

B. I have heard much ſuch inſignificant talk: Suppoſing the Afflicted capable of giving a Teſtimony, we ſtill ſay; that if two Witneſſes aver ſuch a thing concerning a perſon, and he cannot prove himſelf to be in another place at the ſame time, he is legally convicted, and (if innocent yet) he muſt adore God's Sovereign Providence, and acquit the Judges and Juries: But what do you ſay, when they do it whilſt the Accuſed is in preſence, and many Witneſſes muſt ſay it is not he? for he cannot be in two places at once.

S. 'That is the Witchcraft in the caſe, which is hereby diſcovered:

'for it is the Devil who doth all the miſchief, only it is by their conſent,
'otherwiſe they could not be ſupoſed to be Witches.

B. But when it is ſo, it ſtill remains to prove their conſent, which they deny; and your argument is not valid to evince it; it being a concluſion which you draw at leaſt from uncertain premiſes, how then ſhould it be certain! where the Word of God requires that the thing be certain.

S. 'Witches then muſt not be known but by their perſonal Confeſ-
'ſion: and this is to prevent the finding out of ſuch abominations.

B. Otherwiſe Innocent Perſons may be condemned for Witches: and what a fearful thing is that? and know it, that God never intended to bring to light all hidden works or workers of Darkneſs in this World; nor will it be imputed as a Sin, that men did not puniſh ſecret ſins without clear diſcoveries: but if in a precipitant zeal, they ſhould cut off any for Crimes not proved, it will be imputed. Nevertheleſs, there are other [13] ways to find out Witches beſides their own Confeſſion.

S. 'But I hope you will allow this, with ſome other weighty Circum-
'ſtance, to make up an Evidence againſt the Accuſed.

B. I think not: and my reaſon is, becauſe there muſt be at leaſt one Fact proved againſt the perſon, for which he ought to dy: and that is it which his Guilt is to be found upon; and it is enough: but if there be no one ſuch thing, all the Suſpicious Circumſtances will not make it up, becauſe the thing is not made certain by them. Beſides, wiſe men tell us, that never ſo many meer Preſumptions will not do it.

S. 'But ſuppoſe the perſon accuſed cannot prove himſelf in another
'place at the time, will not the Accuſation then ſuffice.

B. No, not in caſe of Witchcraft, when only the Afflicted accuſe, and By-ſtanders can neither ſee nor feel anything: for that ſight is Spectral, and that is preternatural, and ſo not convictive; becauſe, as I before told you, witneſs to matter of Fact, muſt be of things that come under our Senſes, as they are Humane: this therefore proves nothing diſtinctly, or individually, but only disjunctively, *viz.* that it is either by Witchcraft, or more immediately from the Devil.

S. 'I hope you will allow this to be enough to commit perſons to 'Priſon upon ſuſpicion; which may be an introduction to bring in other 'things againſt them.

B. The Law provides that perſons committed for Capital Crimes, be without Bayl; and they muſt at leaſt paſs a Grand-jury ere they can have a delivery: and for that Reaſon, it alſo provides that no perſon ſhall be ſo Committed but for ſomthing which hath at leaſt the value of one clear Teſtimony to prove it ſuch a Crime: Beſides, the name, and Life of the perſon is hereby expoſed; and reaſon tells us, there muſt be ſomthing Teſtifiable againſt him for ſuch a thing: this is no light matter to have mens names for ever Stigmatized, their Families ruined, and their Lives hazarded.

S. 'But by this means have many been diſcovered, and other things 'brought in againſt them, which have detected them and they have ſuf-'fered juſtly.

B. I have nothing to ſay on that account; I never ſaw their Trials. But I know, an error in the Firſt Concoction is not Rectified in the Second. Evil is not to be done that good may come of it. You cannot tell how-many Innocent perſons may be by it ruined for this World. However, good events do not Juſtify unwarrantable actions.

S. 'Sure you will grant it to be enough to bring perſons upon Ex-'amination.

[14] B. Do the Afflicted perſons know perſonally all whom they cry out of?

S. 'No; ſome they never ſaw, it may be never heard of before.

B. And upon whoſe information will you ſend for the accuſed?

S. 'That of the Afflicted.

B. And who informed them?

S. 'The Spectre.

B. Very good, and that's the Devil, turned informer: how are good men like to fare, againſt whom he hath a Particular malice.

S. 'For the moſt part they are known by them, at the leaſt one or 'other of them.

B. It is but a Preſumption; and wiſe men will weigh Preſumptions againſt Preſumptions. There is to be no Examination without grounds of ſuſpicion. Some perſons Credit ought to be accounted too good to be undermined ſo far as to be ſuſpected on ſo ſlight a ground; and it is an injury done them to bring them upon Examination, which renders them openly ſuſpected. I will not deny but for perſons already ſuſpected, and of ill fame, it may occaſion their being Examined; but if nothing elſe comes in, nor a Confeſſion be made; the uſe of ſuch a Preſumption any further ceaſeth: but if other things of moment appear, a further Legal proceeding may be made.

S. 'That is enough for me; we never impriſoned any on a meer 'Spectral Evidence, or the bare accuſation of the Afflicted.

B. Nor Examined any Publickly, who were before of good reputation for Piety? Some think other wiſe; but what is that to me? I would fain know what the other thing is:

S. 'When they have been brought before the Afflicted, they have 'ſtruck them down with their Eyes, and raiſed them again with a touch 'of their hands.

B. You are very uncharitable to ſay they did it, becauſe there have been ſuch things in concomitancy.

S. 'The very poiſon of the Witches eyes hath knock't them down.

B. I ſee you are no Philoſopher: I am ſatisfied that there is Illuſion in this as well as the other; I pray do theſe effects follow meerly on their coming in their ſight, or by uſing of it as an Ordeal?

S. 'It was firſt diſcovered occaſionally, but ſince hath been uſed for 'an experiment, and is found never to fail.

B. The uſe of this as a Trial, is utterly unlawful, as will ere long be made to appear to the World: and beſides, the thing is not evidential, when it is done; but exceedingly fallacious: yea indeed, it is not any whit more a Preſumption than the former, if ſo much.

[15] *S.* 'But it never fails,

B. The more awful the Judgment of God, and the greater the Trial of our ſincerity, if, though the thing comes to paſs, yet we will not be drawn from our obedience to God.

S. 'We have old preſidents for the uſing of ſuch a courſe.

B. No preſident will Juſtify that which is ſinful, the older an error the worſe: beſides, it was borrowed from Popiſh Exorciſts originally.

S. 'Some tell us that there is a natural cauſe for it.

B. And you believe them! The effect is preternatural, and the thing unaccountable: and mens wild gueſſes in ſuch an affair, ought not to paſs for Maxims, where life is concerned. I know not how you ſtand affected; but I profeſs I ſhould be loth to dy upon a meer point of Philoſophy that is at moſt diſputable.

S. 'You are an admirable Advocate for the Witches.

B. This is not the firſt time. But if you thus Reflect, we had as good break off at preſent.

S. 'I would willingly before we part aſk you what you think of the 'accuſation of the Confeſſors, who ſay they have ſeen ſuch in their Meet-'ings, and diverſe Baptized by the Devil. I have heard that you make 'light of this too; whereas we thought it would have put all out of 'queſtion.

B. I have already told you my Judgment of the Confeſſors againſt themſelves: but there is enough (I think) to invalidate their evidence againſt others.

S. 'The Law provides that Accomplices confeſſing are valid againſt 'their Aſſociates.

B. There are diſputes about that, and I am not ſo good a Lawyer as to determine it: only I have to except in this Caſe.

S. 'I would gladly hear what you can ſay to it.

B. Firſt, the perſons confeſſing are Witches bv their own confeſſion,

and have therefore abjured God and Chriſt, and given themſelves up to the Devil, the Father of Lies; and what Credit is to be given to the Teſtimony of ſuch againſt the Lives of others:

S. 'But what if they have openly renounced that Covenant, and teſ-'tified repentance, why are they not now valid?

B. Leſs Crimes require a long probation of perſons repentance: and their bare ſay ſo, is but a poor evidence for them; nay though they ſhed tears and aſk forgiveneſs. Furthermore, ſome things ought to be a perpetual infamy to perſons, and forever diſable them for giving Teſtimony in this World; to be ſure, till they are reſtored plentifully in the Charity of all good men.

[16] S. 'This ſeems harſh Doctrine.

B. But I think it good Doctrine. Yet, Secondly, The things themſelves which they Teſtifie are liable to many Illuſions. The VVitches themſelves do not know when they go in Spectre, and when in Body, and how ſhould they then tell, whether the other be the perſon bodily or only in Spectre? inſtances enough may be produced of ſuch as confidently averred they were carried away in Body, when many VVitneſſes knew the contrary.

S. 'I ſee the difference between us and you is very wide; and I fear 'the conſequence.

B. God is able to clear up theſe things, and let us herein agree to ſeek him for it, in the ways of his Appointment.

FINIS.